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ABSTRACT

A field study conducted in the east Jordan Valley (September 1981-August 1983) explored the role of formal education in the maintenance of sex-gender hierarchy and other social hierarchies. Two rural secondary schools were studied, one for boys and one for girls, both attended by members of several different social/ethnic groups who consider themselves Jordanian bedouin. Curricula in both schools were similar, as all students must take the "tawjihi" state examination. Girls also had two hours of study equivalent to home economics, and were more closely supervised than boys, because of the traditional Islamic concern with protecting women's honor. In the schools studied, 56% of the girls passed their tawjihi exam, and 43% of the boys, reflecting scores in Jordan as a whole. Although social expectations were different for boys and girls, similar importance was given to daughters' and sons' success on the examination, perhaps because Islam traditionally emphasizes learning for women as well as men. Although nearly half the students in Jordan's elementary/secondary schools and teacher training colleges in 1981 were female, percentages were lower at university and postgraduate levels, probably because Jordan's emphasis on women's education began relatively recently. (MH)

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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL HIERARCHIES IN RURAL JORDAN

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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL HIERARCHIES IN RURAL JORDAN

My field work was informed by three assumptions. First, that education is a central institution whereby the dominant systems of meaning are produced and reproduced and therefore, that the study of education in complex societies can reveal and illuminate these premises in much the same way that that religion does in so-called "elementary societies." (Durkheim 1904; Eickelman 1978; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) And following Althusser's model for capitalist societies where schools play a central role in both the reproduction of productive forces and the reproduction of the social relations of production, that schools would be microcosms of the relationships of dominance and subordination which exist in the larger society. (Althusser, 1971)

Secondly, that sexual hierarchy and systems of subordination, although universal, are not the result of primordial transhistorical facts, but are social and cultural systems, --one aspect of the organization of collective life. Sexual hierarchies can therefore be best understood in political and social terms "with reference not to biological constraints but instead to local, specific forms of social relationships, in particular, to social inequality." (Rosaldo,

1987:20) By studying gender in the same way we study the more familiar inequalities in human social life such as race and class, we can better understand how the activities and goals of men and women both reflect and shape social relations and social inequalities. (7) In turn, an understanding how the sex-gender system is produced and reproduced should illuminate the social mechanisms and cultural premises by which other social hierarchies are maintained.

There are three sanctioned unequal social relationships in Islam: believers/non-believers, free persons/slaves and men/women. But with regards to free Muslim males, the Koran is explicitly rejects social inequality. "The believers are naught else than brothers." (Koran 49:10) "The most honored...in the sight of God is the most pious." (Koran 49:13) The lower status of non-believers does not concern us here, as virtually all the local residents of the East Bank of the Jordan Valley are Sunni Muslims.¹ In addition to women and freed slaves, there is another prominent inequality in the region; one which is in comparison with the other two, of absorbing concern to the local residents. That is, the higher status of the settled bedouin tribes of purportedly pure Arab descent such as the 'Abbadis, as against the settled bedouin tribes of mixed racial descent, such as the

¹ There is a small community of Bahai followers living in Addassieh in the northern area of the Valley. Their ancestors came from Persia to Palestine in 1866. (Luke, Harry Charles and Edward Keith-Roach The Handbook of Palestine. London: MacMillan and Co. 1922)

Mashalkhah. In local terms, it is not the racial mixture which is problematic rather the ignorance of the origin of the Mashalkhah tribe. This bedouin concern with 'asl, origin,² is not sanctioned by Islam and as such poses an intellectual problem for the 'Abbadis, a theodicy if you will.³ How can they, as good Muslims, justify this undeniable inequality? Or inversely, how can they, as good bedouin, ignore differences of such great cultural importance, regardless of the Islamic injunction to do so? I believe that it is precisely because of this intellectual conflict that the relative status of the 'Abbadis and the Mashalkhah commands such attention in the minds of the local tribesmen.

* * * * *

A field study was conducted from September 1981 to August 1983 in the east Jordan Valley to explore the role of formal education in the production and reproduction of the sex-gender system and other social hierarchies. A boys and a girls secondary schools were studied in the Dayr Alla sub-district

² 'Asl is based on a pre-Islamic Arab concept of descent from one or the other of two ancestors, 'Adnan or Kahtan. The descendants of Kahtan are the southern Arabs Kabail al-Yaman whose origin is traditionally assigned to the south-western corner of the Peninsula, while the descendants of 'Adnan are the Northern Arabs. Although this division is translated into the Qays and Yaman split in Palestine and Lebanon, Jordanian bedouin do not identify themselves with either one or the other of the groups in daily life. (Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 1, 544)

³ I use theodicy in a broad sense to mean any logical contradiction in an ethical belief system. (Obeyeskere, 19:149)

of the Belqa governate, located in the middle region of the east Jordan Valley. Children from several different social groups attend these schools-- members of the 'Abbad confederation of tribes; their freed black slaves; and the Mashalkhah, a mulatto tribe. All three groups consider themselves to be Jordanian bedouin. In addition, Palestinians of both bedouin and village origin who came to the Valley as refugees in 1948 and in 1967 inhabit the area and attend the schools.⁴ Mulatto tribes like the Mashalkhah inhabit the entire length of the Valley and the lowlands to the south of the Dead Sea. They are probably descendants of black African slaves brought to work the sugar cane plantations which flourished in the Valley during the Ayyubid era (1015-1468).⁵ They are known generically by the derogatory term, Ghorani, literally "people of the Ghor" and are considered to be "the original inhabitants of the Valley." The various mulatto tribes acknowledge neither kinship nor so-

⁴ There are no United Nations Refugee Welfare Agency (UNRWA) schools in the area. Several UNRWA schools were opened in the region in 1966/7. At least 300,000 Palestinians crossed the bridges over the Jordan River during the 1967 war. About half of these stayed in emergency camps which were set up throughout the Jordan Valley because the milder weather in the Valley was more suitable to tent camps. A girls elementary school was opened in Dayr Alla in 1966/7 for 177 students. In 1967/68 a mixed elementary school was also opened for 108 girls and 189 boys. In 1967/8 a boys and a girls preparatory school were opened in Muaddi (564 boys, 280 girls) and a mixed elementary school was opened in Abu Obeidah (83 boys, 71 girls). These schools were closed down and the students transferred to other areas following the Israeli invasion of the East Bank in February 1968.

⁵ (Albright, 1924:4;1934:14)

cial ties with the mulatto tribes of other parts of the Valley. Although mulatto tribes inhabiting other regions did agricultural labor for various Arab bedouin tribes in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Mashalkhah tribe who live in the area of this study, do not seem to have ever worked for other tribes⁶

Since 1952 the Mashalkhah and 'Abbadis have had individual land rights to their traditional tribal areas in the Valley and since the construction of the East Ghor Canal in 1966 this land is amongst the most valuable agricultural property in the country.⁷

Most, but not all of the 'Abbad tribes had slaves until slavery was abolished in Jordan in 1929.⁸ Most of the freed slaves still live with the tribe to whom they were enslaved and go by their former masters' tribal name. The freed

⁶ The mulattos inhabiting the area south of the Dead Sea did agricultural labor for the Majali tribe of Kerak. (Gubser, 1968:65-66; Albright, 19) Likewise, those living in Adwan territory, adjacent to the 'Abbadis' territory in the Valley, worked the farms of the Adwan tribe. (Conder, 1892:316)

⁷ The Mashalkhah inhabit the region west of the Zerqa River and the Ghor 'Abbadis the area to the east of the Zerqa. However, some 'Abbadis own land west of the river and some Mashalkhah members live in the predominately 'Abbad village of Mu'addi.

⁸ The Qanun al-Asasi, 1929, which proclaimed the abolition of slavery was the basis of the constitution which was enacted in 1952 when the Trans-Jordanian Emirate became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Under the constitution, all citizens, regardless of social standing or religion are equal.

slaves are still referred to and addressed as 'abd, slave.

The 'Abbadis consider themselves to be superior to both their ex-slaves and the Mashalkhah and they consider their ex-slaves to have higher status than the Mashalkhah.' The ex-slaves in turn, believe that they, as 'Abbadi tribesmen, are also superior to the Mashalkhah. The Mashalkhah, on the other hand, do not accept this status system. They assert that they are all equals. They know that 'Abbadis despise them and insult them behind their backs but point out that they do not dare to insult them to their face because, they explain, there is no basis for the 'Abbadi prejudice.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN JORDAN

Although Islam is a religion of the book, popular literacy is relatively new to Jordan. In 1914, on the eve of the Arab Revolt, there were 21 Ottoman state elementary schools

* The higher status of blacks, in this case, freed slaves over mixed-blood people is relatively new in Arab Islamic world. In the early Islamic period, half-breeds, i.e. children of Arab men and non-Arab concubines, had higher status than non-Arab converts but lower status than free Arabs. In the case of both North African converts and half-breeds, color was not an issue. The particular ethnic identity of the non-Arab half seems to have been of secondary importance to Arabs at least. (Lewis, 1971:25, 11)

The many contradictory Hadiths of the period reflect the struggles in the early Islamic empire between the pure Arab conquistador aristocracy which claimed both ethnic and social superiority and the converted among the conquered who could claim neither ethnic nor family advantage, and perhaps for that reason insisted on the primacy of religious merit. (Lewis:20)

in Trans-Jordan with approximately 1,000 pupils including 59 girls in two girls schools. These schools, regulated by the Ottoman Education Law of 1869, were modeled on the French system.

In addition, there were traditional Kuttab schools for Muslims and a handful of small church and missionary schools for Christians. (Tibawi, 1972:101) Foreign mission schools had a much smaller presence in Jordan than in the rest of Greater Syria under Ottoman rule. But during the British mandate the British planned and directed most of the educational reforms. During this time at least five new British Mission schools were opened in Jordan. (Tibawi, 1972:251)

When the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was established in 1951, there were only about 11,500 boys and 2,250 girls in preparatory and secondary schools in Jordan. In 1957, the Arab Cultural Unity Pact was signed by Jordan, Syria and Egypt. A uniform education ladder was adopted (6 year elementary; 3 year preparatory; 3 year secondary with the last two years being divided into scientific and literary streams) and standards equalized at every level. (See Figure 1 for the current educational ladder in Jordan.) Provision was also made for the exchange of professors, teachers and experts and for the admission of students from each of the three signatory countries to educational institutions in the others. (112) In 1964 Jordan extended the Compulsory

Education Law to the preparatory stage and was in the process the first country in the Middle East to do so. (Qubain, 1966:21)

Under H.M. King Hussein, the school system has expanded so rapidly that the goal of providing a basic education free to all citizens has been virtually achieved. Accordingly, in the last few years the Ministry of Education has shifted its attention to improving the quality of education.

Jordan is a country with few natural resources and claims its highly educated and industrious population as one of its primary resources.¹⁰ The oil boom and the out-migration of Jordanian men to the Gulf area, created a labour shortage in Jordan. This has served as an added impetus for the education and training of women. Although illiteracy rates still show strong variance between male and female, these figures are misleading because of the extreme youth of the Jordanian population-- 53% are under 15 years of age and hence 38% of the population was estimated to be attending schools in 1980/81. Hence, the male/female differential at this level is probably a legacy of the period before the proliferation of schools throughout the kingdom.¹¹

¹⁰ Workers remittances constituted 42% of the Gross National Product in 1976. (Birks and Sinclair, 1978:18)

¹¹ The illiteracy programs accordingly are directed especially at women. In 1980/81, of the 7,299 adults who successfully completed the literacy program, 84% were females. (Masri, 1982:19)

There have been great strides in expanding the participation of females in education. Today nearly half of the students in elementary, preparatory, secondary schools and Teachers Training Colleges are female.¹² The following table shows the percentage of female students at each educational level in 1970/71 and 1980/81.¹³ However, the percentage drops dramatically at the university level and even more so for post graduate studies. While 40% of those studying at the two universities in Jordan are female, 80% of the Jordanians at college are studying outside of Jordan. Only 11% of Jordanian students enrolled in non-Jordanian universities in 1980/81 were female. Hence, females make up only 27% of Jordan's university students. The dearth of women at the post graduate level is even more striking. Only 13% of post graduate students in Jordan are women and these are overwhelmingly concentrated the fields of education and psychology.

The low percentage of women at the university and post graduate levels, like the higher illiteracy rates for women on the other end of the academic ladder, may be to a certain extent, the result of a time lag since the proliferation of

¹² According to the census taken in Jordan in November 1979, the population of the East Bank amounted to 2,153,000 48% of which was female.

¹³ The figures for this section are taken from Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Ministry of Education, The Statistical Year Book, 1980/81.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION ABOVE AGE 12 ILLITERATE IN 1976

REGION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
RURAL	28.0	61.4	44.3
URBAN	15.5	36.5	26.0
ALL	17.8	40.9	29.3

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE STUDENTS

	1970/71	1980/81
PRE-SCHOOL	25%	43%
COMPULSORY Ages 6-15	40%	47%
GENERAL SECONDARY	32%	45.3%
VOCATIONAL SECONDARY	23%	30%
COMMUNITY COLLEGES	27%	46%
UNIVERSITIES IN JORDAN	31.5%	40.2%
POST GRADUATE IN JORDAN		13%
UNIVERSITIES OUTSIDE JORDAN		11%

TABLE 2

schools in the kingdom in the last two decades.¹⁴

The curricula for boys and girls are quite standardized. Because the main objective of preparatory and secondary schooling is the successful completion of the tawjihi state examination, the curricula of boys and girls schools are

¹⁴ In 1979/80 only 58 of the 594 university faculty members at Jordanian universities were women. The percentage is higher for Teachers Training Institute instructors, 158 out of 594 in 1979/80.

very similar. During the final year of secondary school the lion's share of class time (a total of 33 hours a week) is spent on the subjects for which they will be held accountable on the tawjihi exam, namely religion, Arabic, English, math, and Arab society and the Palestine Issue. In addition to these core subjects there is a scientific stream (physics, chemistry and biology) and a literary stream (modern Arab history, geography of the Arab World, and general science.)

All third secondary students spend one hour per week on physical training, and one hour on art. Girls also have two hours of thakafa, literally "culture", but which is equivalent to home economics in America, while boys have two hours of agricultural training.

At the national level females are out-performing males on the tawjihi state examination. Each year the top ten students in each stream are congratulated by the King and Queen at the Royal Palace. In 1981/82 nearly 75% of those honored were women.¹⁵

¹⁵ The rural/urban differential may be more important. Only one of those honored at the palace in 1981/2 was from a school outside of the capital.

THE DAYR ALLA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AND MUADDI
SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

The first state school was opened in the Dayr Alla sub-district in 1950. Today there are nine boys schools, nine girls schools and four mixed schools in the subdistrict. I studied the Dayr Alla Secondary School for Girls (DASG) and the Muaddi Secondary School for Boys (MSB). I chose secondary schools because they are non-compulsory and therefore should indicate more about educational patterns of the different social and sexual groups. I concentrated on the class about to graduate, the "third secondary class", in which preparation for the tawjihi state examination was the main study activity.

The tawjihi exam is the highpoint of education in Jordan today. Although many continue on to higher educational levels, there is no replicating the importance attached to succeeding on the tawjihi exam. Because of the youth of the Jordanian population, practically every family is touched by the event. It is a virtual certainty that in any given year either a relative or neighbor would have taken the exam. In the capital, students come out in the streets at midnight when the results are announced in the newspaper. In city and town success is celebrated by the family and the community. The local radio station plays a special congratulatory song for days on end. And as mentioned above the top students are honored personally by the King and Queen.

In the two schools I studied in the Valley, female academic performance was higher than that of males. Fifty-six percent of the girls passed their tawjihi exam while only 43% of the boys passed.¹⁶ (See Tables 3 and 4 for a breakdown of students' success by sex and by stream and the further education of those who succeeded.)

Suprisingly, more females from this area went abroad to attend a university than did boys. This is suprising on two counts. First, because girls score higher on the exams, one would expect to find a higher percentage of them at the Jordanian universties which require higher academic standards for acceptance than other universities in the region. Secondly, because of the concern with protecting women's honor in the Arab world one would expect fewer girls to travel far from the watchful eye of their families. Six out of the

¹⁶ There are noticable differences between the scientific stream and literary streams both in terms of size and achievement. The scientific stream was much larger at MSB than it was at DASG. Only 26% of the female seniors were in the scientific stream compared with 55% of the male seniors. In both cases, the scientific stream had much higher achievement records. Sixty-nine percent of the girls in scientific stream passed the tawjihi and 65% of the boys. In comparison only 43.4% of the girls in the literary stream and a mere 21% of the boys passed their tawjihi exams. None of the literary stream students, whether male or female, who passed their exams continued to university. Instead of going to a community college, seven of the girls in the literary stream took a typing class as did one of the girls in the scientific stream who failed the exam but was planing to re-take the exam the following year. Five of the boys who passed in the scientific stream and five of those who failed were either drafted or joined the army. Twelve of the boys who did not pass in the literary stream and one who passed were also in the army the following year.

nine girls who went to university studied outside of Jordan, whereas only two of the seven boys who continued to university studied outside.

We have seen in terms of attendance, curriculum, and achievement Jordanian women seem to be enjoying relatively equal, if not privileged, educational opportunities to men.

However, the educational experience of girls differs strikingly from that of boys. The atmosphere in the girls school is markedly more disciplined than in the boys school. The girls are continually supervised. If a teacher is absent, the students are not allowed to go home early. The explicit rationale for this is that a girl's whereabouts should always be known. Parents need to be guaranteed a regular school schedule so they know when to expect their girls home, thus leaving no opportunity for dallying on the way. In contrast, the male students come and go as they please. For example, the trial exam given by the schools in preparation for the state exam is optional for the boys and indeed very few of them chose to take it. Girls on the other hand are required to come to school as always and to take the exam.

Throughout the kingdom girls are required to wear school uniforms, but boys are not. The long-sleeved cotton dresses are different colors for each level so the educational status of an individual girl and the over-all hierarchical

	SCIENTIFIC STREAM			LITERARY STREAM		
	STUDENTS	WHO PASSED	WHO CONTINUED	STUDENTS	WHO PASSED	WHO CONTINUED
# FEMALES	16	11	10	46	0	11
% FEMALES	26	69	62.5	74	43.4	26.6
# MALES	34	22	14	28	6	5
% MALES	55	65	41.1	45	21	17

TABLE 3

	SCIENTIFIC STREAM			LITERARY STREAM		
	UNIVERSITY IN JORDAN	UNIVERSITY FOREIGN	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	UNIVERSITY IN JORDAN	UNIVERSITY FOREIGN	COMMUNITY COLLEGE
# FEMALES	2	5	3	1	1	9
# MALES	5	2	7	0	0	3

TABLE 4

structure of the school is obvious at a glance. In addition, a strict code of dress is maintained. No makeup is allowed, and in schools where there are some male teachers, such as DASG, girls are "encouraged" by the headmistress to wear long pants under their knee-length dresses. "just in case they don't know how to sit or forget themselves."

In addition, the headmistress opens all letters that the students receive at school and calls the parents if she suspects that the letters are not from a relative. She counsels parents on the moral behavior of their girls both inside and outside of the school.¹⁷

The DASG has the dubious reputation of being the best cooks and hostesses in the Valley. Accordingly when ever there is an official delegation of visiting dignitaries DASG is asked to serve lunch at the school. This involves most of the teaching and administrative staff in several days of preparation. Three such visits occurred during the two year period of my study. Classes were cancelled or re-scheduled, the library closed as a result.

Although the government is concerned about the higher drop-out rate for females in preparatory and secondary school, there is an unwritten law that a girl may not con-

¹⁷ There is overall much more personalized attention to the students in the girls school. In comparison, the teaching staff of the boys school were hard pressed to give me any personal information on any of the students such as what they were doing after graduation.

tinue in the public school system after she marries. The rationale for this, as explained to me by a headmistress, is that "they might talk." Married boys, on the other hand, are not considered a threat to the morality of other school boys. And the fact that both boys and girls spend much of their non-school time in the company of married people of their own sex, is not considered to be important.

Married women may take afternoon classes but these are only available for elementary school and for the final year of secondary school. Furthermore, the highly prestigious scientific stream is not offered in evening school.¹⁸ Thus, an early-marrying Jordanian female risks being deprived of up to five years of education. Although the director of the adult education program in Jordan told me that evening students do better than average on the tawjihi examination, the evening schools in the Balqa governate ranked lower than all but one of the regular schools in the governate on the tawjihi exam in 1981/2.

What is the subjective experience of boys and girls in schools in Jordan? One way of answering the question is to look at the way students attribute their academic success or failure to internal factors such as ability or effort or to external factors such as luck or the difficulty or ease of the task. Ninety boys from the third secondary and third

¹⁸ The one exception to this is in the Baq'a refugee camp.

preparatory classes of the Muaddi school for boys and 85 girls from the DASG completed achievement attribution questionnaires. They were asked to assign percentage weights to each of the four factors (ability, effort, luck, ease or difficulty of the task) adding up to 100% to explain their previous semester's academic achievement. They were also asked what they expected to get on the second semester exam. Later these grades were compared with their actual scores.

My findings showed that although males and females and to a lesser extent members of different social groups, differed in the ways they explain achievement, the overall importance attached to ability, effort, luck and task difficulty as causal factors shows very little variation across sex and social group. Not one significant correlation was established.¹⁹

Another indicator of equality is seen in the celebration given for success on the tawjihi exam. The importance attributed to daughters' and sons' success on the tawjihi seems to be very similar, judging from the celebrations given by the proud parents. The celebration is modelled on the marriage celebration. Sheep or goats are slaughtered, women youyou, men fire their guns with equal fervor regardless of

¹⁹ Although co-education is not uncommon at the elementary stage, there is virtually no co-education at the preparatory and secondary stages in Jordan. Thus women may be spared the fear of achievement effect experienced by women in America in co-educational classes. (Deem, 1978:75,76)

the sex of the student. The student wears new clothes and pictures are taken. All members of the community are expected to come and congratulate the family on their good fortune. Bitter coffee and sweets are served. Thus, we have seen that in terms of achievement, the credit attributed to oneself for that achievement, females enjoy similar success and self esteem, and social acknowledgment for their academic success as do boys.

Despite these similarities the educational experience of Jordanian girls differs considerably from that of Jordanian boys. The school experience prepares children for conforming to the political and psychological processes of the social system and for matching patterns of obedience in the larger society. It is clear that both boys and girls in Jordan's schools are being taught to operate within hierarchies. The school itself is a hierarchical structure in which children move from inferior to superior classes and in which people act in obedience to ascending sets of authority (children to teachers, teachers to headmasters or mistresses, headteachers to superintendents). The very spatial organization--sitting behind rows of desks and standing in lines, --keeps the students in the position of having to accept authority. (Althuser, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1976) But boys are kept in this position much less frequently and less systematically than are girls. Girls are taught submission to authority, what it means to be a woman, and what

care one must take to control and regularize one's sexuality.

In terms of the hierarchy of social groups, there are noticeable differences in the academic achievement of different social groups in the two schools studied. Sixty percent of the 'Abbadi students passed their tawjihi exam in 1981/82, compared with a 44.4% success rate for the Palestinian students and only 33.3% success for Mashlakhah students.²⁰ However, the achievement attributions and predictions of one's future success indicate less difference in the subjective experience of students from different social groups than one might expect. As in the case of sex, not one significant correlation was established between social group and achievement attribution patterns.

Another way of examining the role of the social organization within the schools is through seating arrangements, given the fact that seating is voluntary. In 1981 the seating in both streams in both the boys and the girls schools was not organized by social group. Students from different

²⁰ There are eight students from the Balawana tribe in the scientific streams of MSB and DASG. Seven out of the eight passed their tawjihis in 1981/82 thus giving the Balawana tribe by far the highest percentage of success. It is difficult to assess this difference in social group achievement because the Balawana students come a greater distance to DASG rather than attending the school in their village because the scientific stream is not offered there. And as has already been mentioned, the scientific streams in both schools have significantly higher success rates than the literary streams.

groups shared desks. And regardless of an extreme 'Abbadi view expressed to me by an adult, that an 'Abbadi would never allow a Mashalkhah to sit in front of them, Mashalkhah students were as likely to sit in the front rows as in the rear.²¹

²¹ It may be that outside of the classroom, the bedouin status hierarchy immediately reasserts itself. Because of the rigid hierarchical status structure of the school, it was difficult for me to mingle freely with students at school. As an adult, and a high status adult at that, I was expected to sit either in the head mistresses' office or with the teachers during breaks. It was, accordingly, impossible for me to accurately record student interactions in the play area between classes.

THE IDEOLOGY OF EQUALITY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Why aren't schools microcosms of the social hierarchical system of the larger society?²² In order to explain this we must look to both the original forums for the negotiation of tribal hierarchies and also to the history of Islamic education in the context of the Islamic doctrine of equality.

A clear exposition of the cultural premises which organize this bedouin system of inter-tribal hierarchy is provided by Colonel 'Abbadi.²³ Colonel 'Abbadi is an 'Abbadi tribesman, who recently completed a Ph.D. in social anthropology on bedouin justice in Jordan and has written a number of books on different aspects of Jordanian bedouin life. He may be considered a cosmologizer for the tribe.

Col. 'Abbadi acknowledges that although the tribes seem equal in outward appearance, "the Bedouin social order contains the contradiction that the Bedouin recognise two categories of people, one category considering itself honorable in descent and behavior...noble...and another category despised because of its descent and behavior, which recognises its status as such ..."(1983:128) Treachery (ghadr), not

²² Perhaps, one might argue, because formal state-run schools are a new institution and have no history of inter-tribal status negotiation. But just because an institution is new does not explain why it is not incorporated as a new forum into the status system.

²³ What concerns us here are inter-tribal status negotiations. One of the main points of Col. 'Abbadi's thesis is the egalitarian values within each tribe.

protecting one's honor ('ird), and being regarded as weak (du'afa') because of not raiding others are three examples of despicable behavior.²⁴

I would argue that one of the reasons schools are not being used to play out the negotiations of the status hierarchies is because one of the major criteria for noble or ignoble status, i.e. lineage descent, 'asl, does not have a place in this arena. 'Asl is the result of a legal marriage. It is therefore, the realm of kinship and marriage which has been, and remains, the pre-eminent forum in terms of the production and reproduction of inter-tribal status hierarchies and also, to a certain extent, an individual's place within the status hierarchy of any given tribe.

²⁴ Col. 'Abbadi lists only three tribes as despised among Jordanian bedouin the Islubah, Ihtaym and Shararat. They are considered contemptible because of their descent and their behaviour. They do not raid and indeed two of them (Islubah and Ihtaym) do not even bear arms. (129)

Col. 'Abbadi does not mention the Mashalkhah although it is clear in talking to him that he considers them to be despised. Perhaps the reason he does not list them is that the Mashalkhah do carry arms. As a matter of fact, the oral history of the period surrounding the arrival of Emir Abdullah in the region indicates that the Mashalkhah were a force to be contended with in the earlier half of this century. In terms of other behavior, the generosity of the sheikh of the al-Naim clan of the Mashalkhah is undisputed by the 'Abbadis but the Mashalkhah are thought to be wanting in terms of protecting the honor of women, 'ird.

Since children of marriagable age do not attend co-educational schools, marriage negotiations, the main procedure effecting tribal status, do not feature in the school context.

The educational system in Jordan is modeled on the modern western systems which are based on the liberal ideal of equal educational opportunities for all citizens. Nevertheless, education in Jordan is irrevocably linked with Islam. Although the structure and organization of the school system is modeled on the secular systems of the west, the very concept of learning is an Islamic one and therefore also based on a doctrine of equality. Within the overarching ideology of equality in Islam, one might argue that education is a particularly equalitarian institution. Several prophetic traditions support this, such as, "The quest for learning is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim, male and female." The precedent for women's right to education was established with the Prophet. Women complained to the Prophet that men had an advantage over them so he set apart a day for women and admonished them." Another tradition says that praise is due to one who educates his slave girl, frees her and marries her. It has been suggested that women began to be important in education when the early Muslims asked the widows of the prophet for information about him. Tritton cites numerous examples of learned women from the beginning of Islam through the fourteenth century. "Women are not uncommon in

the lists of teachers or famous scholars, and there is no sign that men were ashamed of having sat at the feet of a woman." (Tritton, 1957:142)

Early Islamic scholars debated the relative importance of lineage, occupations and knowlege with regards to the legal doctrine of equality in marriage. For example, the nineteenth century jurist, Ibn 'Abidin placed knowledge above lineage saying that a "learned non-Arab is equal to an 'Alawite girl because of the honor of knowledge ('ilm) is above the honor of lineage.(cited in Ziadah, 1957:514) He lists the relative status of different trades but says that the scheme is not absolute. For instance, "a non-Arab merchant of spices is not the equal of an Arab merchant or of a learned merchant of spices. Further, an ignorant, non-Arab merchant of spices is not the equal of a learned barber."(Ziadah, 1957:514)

Islamic learning is also exceptional in terms of its reception and assimilation of other bodies of knowledge. The idea of learning was associated with travel to other lands to study with scholars there regardless of their origin. A prophetic tradition counsels "Wisdom is the goal of the believer and he must seek it irrespective of its source." And this contributed to the special status accorded to the people of the book, Christians and Jews. Tritton cites a number of cases from the 9-14th century of Muslims studying un-

der Christians and Jews and inversely a number of cases of Muslims teaching Jews and Christians. (Tritton, 144-5)

At the local level there is some evidence that the concept of education being available to all was current. In the 1940's six 'Abbadî young men studied in their hill land territory with a sheikh. Among those studying was an ex-slave of the tribe.

I would argue, therefore, that the school is one of the few arenas of social life where the bedouin/Islamic theodicy of hierarchy and equality is suspended.²⁵ Within the school system, the bedouin system of tribal hierarchies is crosscut by the equalizing tendencies of both Islam and a modern national institution. But does this equalizing force have any long term effects on the old tribal status system? Or does the bedouin system immediately reassert itself outside of the classroom, in other arenas of life? And is the school experience changing the traditional status of women, directly or indirectly? Are there other ideologies which crosscut the bedouin status system? These questions will be addressed in a subsequent paper.

²⁵ This process may be likened to the way the Azande make use of a belief system which contains internal contradictions. Only certain aspects of the belief system are relevant in certain contexts. (Evans-Pritchard, 1976:149-151)

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